1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17

both a psychological and a ritual necessity. Notwithstanding this preference for sons, in actual practice no discrimination is observed in the treatment of children on the grounds of their sex.

As a rule infants are treated with affection. Until a child is four or five years old, it is mainly a responsibility of the mother. The mother nurses it whenever it starts crying indicating its desire to be fed. The child sleeps with its mother in the night and is at liberty to suck whenever it likes. Feeding of the child is primarily the mother's duty. However, when it is six to eight months old, elder sisters, female relations and male members of the household may start sharing this task with her by occasionally giving solid food to the child. While other relations give some food to the child occasionally, its attachment to the mother does not diminish in any significant way, as it is breast-fed by her until it is four or five years old. In teaching the child regular habits of sphincter control, standing, walking and speaking the mother's share is very considerable.

On the whole, an infant is the cause of delight to the family, and it is often fondled and carried about by the elders. They all invariably make funny faces and peculiar noises to make the baby smile, fondle it in many different ways, and find great enjoyment in imitating its meaningless sounds.

The situation radically changes after the child reaches the age of five or six years. Now the parents must be strong and should start disciplining it. At this stage the child finds the father an authoritarian figure and begins to fear him. The liberty that he was allowed during his early childhood is increasingly curtailed. Now the accent is on good behaviour and regular habits. The child is more frequently spanked for being troublesome. Absorbed in the care of a younger baby, the mother may often have to leave the elder child to spend most of his time in his own way. During the day-time he mostly plays out of doors with other children of his age-group. As he grows older the discipline becomes more and more difficult. At first he was punished for being 'troublesome' or for 'crying without reason', but now he has to distinguish clearly between things to be done and things not to be done. The child must be very particular about the latter. These include mostly urinating and defecating inside the house, demanding food and money at odd times too often, beating younger brothers and sisters, stealing, lying and using foul language. As a general rule, the

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17

854 needs of the child. Attention given to the infant during these months is fairly constant. Even in the poorer families the mother does not go out to work, leaving the child alone at home, during these months; although her domestic duties may require partial abandonment of the child in the busy hours of morning and evening. In the families on the upper economic levels of the community the infant is well looked after indeed; its crying is looked upon as
[853] a sign of distress and everything is done to pacify it. In the matter of breast feeding no definite schedule is followed: the child is fed whenever 'it is hungry and asks for food, by crying' or when 'the mother's breasts become heavy'. At night the infant sleeps with the mother, generally with a nipple in its mouth and is allowed to
[863] suck whenever it desires. Toilet training at this stage is completely neglected, and soiling of clothes does not arouse any disgust. It is taken in a matter-of-fact way, and the wet clothes are changed whenever they are noticed by the mother or any other female relative. When the child starts crying the usual way to pacify it is for the mother to offer it her breast. If this is not possible at the moment, or if it fails to achieve the desired objective, other methods may be tried. The mother, a female relation or a sibling may take up the child, mildly pat it continuously on the back and hum a lullaby to send it to sleep. It may be put in a cradle attached to a swing and rocked slowly. Another method very commonly employed by anyone who happens to be near the crying child is to distract it by making funny noises or by engaging in a one-way conversation with it. Recourse may also be taken to a gentle massage of its genitals by the mother or one of its siblings.

855 After this stage of early infancy, during the pre-walking stage, the pattern of treatment accorded to the child is somewhat different. About three months after birth the mother is called upon to take her full share of household and economic duties, and consequently she can no longer give her undivided attention to the child. Other women members of the household, particularly older sisters, now come increasingly to share this responsibility. When the child is a little older and 'it is easy to handle it' menfolk also begin to look after it now and then. At this stage it does not receive the constant attention which it received during the earlier stage, and the frequency and duration of periods of partial abandonment also increase. Feeding continues to be irregular. At four or five months some soft foods are gradually introduced. When the child